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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a view of counseling in the year 2000 and lists future trends particular to counseling through a scenario entitled "A Day in the Life of a Counselor," which predicts the impact of computers and technological change. Changes in job skills, work values, and places of employment and the role of the counselor in meeting changing needs of clients are also discussed. The materials contain the prediction that technology will not change the counselor's basic role of fostering self-understanding and communication between persons, and also present a hypothetical dialogue which illustrates this future role of the counselor. (JAC)

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COUNSELING IN THE YEAR 2000:

A Day in the Life of a Counselor

by

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COUNSELING IN THE YEAR 2000

with

"A Day in the Life of a Counselor"

The future affects us in a variety of ways. We may be frightened by the uncertainty of the future and the changes that we will have to face. We may be exhilarated by the opportunities ahead. Or we may even choose to ignore the future and live only for today. But no matter how we choose to deal with it, we all are inexorably propelled into the future.

By nature, counselors are future-oriented professionals. Even though effort goes into helping clients deal with the "hear and now," the majority of counseling is directed toward planning and decision making--future oriented activities. Counselors expect their clients to develop an ability to project themselves into the future by using the skills learned in the counseling experience to solve problems they will encounter later in their lives.

But what about counselors themselves? Are they developing a future-oriented view of themselves and their profession? The intent of this paper is to present one view of counseling in the year 2000. First, several general future trends and trends particular to

counseling will be listed. Then a scenario of "A Day in the Life of a Counselor," will be presented.

GENERAL FUTURE TRENDS

The following future trends are some of the many that will have an impact on the counseling profession. They obviously do not include all future trends, but are a condensation from the authors listed in the bibliography, and are listed because of their particular impact on counseling:

1.) The Impact of Electronic Communication and Computing Cannot be Underestimated. We will be living in an "intelligent" environment, having extensive and constant contact with computers and telecommunication devices. The marketplace will become customized rather than mass produced, courtesy of computers. We will have the capacity to be instantly in communication with persons throughout the world. Offices will have the capacity to eliminate the use of paper, relying on electronic mail and storage. Because of changes in both hardware and software, it will become easier for the average person to use computers.

2.) The Composition of American Society will Change. The median age in our country is gradually rising, and this trend will continue well past the year 2000. Recent waves of immigrants will grow in their influence, especially Hispanics and Asians.

3.) Job Skills will Rapidly be Outdated. Due to changing technology job skills will be rapidly outdated, requiring periodic retraining. This may also necessitate more persons making several very radical career changes during their lifetimes. This trend is present now, but will continue to grow in its influence.

4.) The Changing Workplace. Industries that are service-producing (computer software, health, mental health, recreation, etc.) will have far more growth and expansion than goods-producing (manufacturing) industries. More women will be entering the workplace, and the role and influence of women will continue to change. Fewer jobs will require a four-year college degree, instead they will require specific technical training.

5.) Shifting Work Values. A trend that has started will continue with more workers wanting: more time off, more flex-time, opportunities for part-time work, and any changes that will allow work to be fit around a person's lifestyle.

6.) Smaller Organizations will Develop. The inability of huge corporations and organizations to respond rapidly to changes in society and the marketplace, may allow for the development of smaller, more responsive organizations. These small organizations may be interconnected by computers.

7.) The Capacity for Home-Based Activities will Increase. Many workers will be able to accomplish their tasks at home via a computer terminal. This will provide for less commuting and more time at home engaged in family activities.

8.) Education will Become Highly Individualized. Because of computer support it will finally become possible to have a totally individualized educational plan for each person. Teachers will be able to concentrate on affective and integrative learning, computers will teach the content material.

9.) Greater World Interdependency. Super-powers will be less able to dominate the world by controlling resources. By necessity, greater world sharing and cooperation will develop.

FUTURE COUNSELING TRENDS

The following are some of the future trends that are more specific the the counseling profession:

1.) The Need for Intercultural Skills. Because of immigration and improved world-wide communication, counselors will need to acquire skills in intercultural counseling. Special training will be needed.

2.) Life-Long Learning. We have been in an era in which the concept of life-long learning has been accepted. This

trend will continue and gain even greater acceptance. Counseling may focus on the examination of the life cycle, rather than focusing on certain decision or crisis times.

3.) Broader Applications of Counseling. Counseling will be used in a variety of life situations, including: liesure, health, and aging. Counselors may be part of "holistic" teams of professionals such as doctors, clergy, teachers and others who are committed to the development of healthy lifestyles.

4.) Counselor Licensure. Counselors will be licensed and require periodic verification of skills. This may encourage the development of several grades of counselors, including paraprofessionals. Constant retraining of counselors will be necessary.

5.) Computers and Counseling. Computers will increasingly be used as supplements to counseling. In some situations, especially in career and educational counseling, the client may be using the computer directly, without meeting with the counselor.

6.) Interdisciplinary Education. Since many jobs will be merely at the technician level, schools may change their programs to focus on self-development and interdisciplinary

education. The goal of education may become to develop the person, rather than strictly train that person for a job.

7.) Group and Consultative Functions. Counselors can serve as change agents, and have greater impact by working with groups or organizations, rather than working strictly with individuals. As cost cutting occurs in many schools and agencies, group activities will become even more important.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A COUNSELOR IN THE YEAR 2000

The following scenario was written to incorporate some of the above trends and is an attempt by this author to project himself into his own counseling future:

SETTING: A "Community Learning Clearinghouse" somewhere in the Midwest.

DATE: The Year 2000

"Good Morning, Dave."

"Hi Bill. How are your doing this morning?"

Bill has been with us for nearly two years now and is an excellent worker. He was certified as a counseling paraprofessional after doing his intership with us. His responsibilities include handling all of

our intakes, scheduling our time, and coordinating all communication. In spite of his cheerful nature, I do at times miss the hustle and bustle of the old office staff. With the improvements in word and teleprocessing, a full office staff is no longer necessary.

"I had to readjust your morning schedule because that young man you have been working with, John, called. He sounded a little upset, so I moved your license review time to this afternoon. Hope you don't mind. Check your monitor for your new appointment schedule."

"That's fine, you know I don't mind changes like that."

That's what makes Bill so effective. He has a natural ability to understand people's needs. He'll do great work when he completes his professional counseling licensure.

After settling into my office and pouring a cup of coffee I began reviewing my morning mail. It's not really mail anymore, ever since I had my desk-top CRT installed. Nearly all messages and letters are electronically transmitted and appear on my screen on command. I "file" those I wish to save by placing them in a cross-referenced storage memory file and dispose of my "junk mail" simply by erasing the message. My terminal also displays my daily appointment calendar, as well as having the capacity for tapping into various data bases for use with my clients.

"Dave,....John is here a few minutes early."

"Fine. Send him in."

I had seen John several times and he displayed a general lack of confidence, and a great deal of self-defeating behavior. It had

taken him quite a few sessions to begin to open up to me and share his feelings.

"Good morning John. Come in and have a seat..."

John began slowly, speaking softly, with his eyes cast down, not wanting to meet mine. But with time he began to loosen up and started talking freely. His most recent love affair had just crumbled and as usual he was resting the total blame on his own shoulders. Our world today is one of instant electronic communication, but one thing has not changed and probably will never change: the most important type of human communication is to have a face to face sharing of feelings. John had just lost an important source of communication, and today he needed to talk with me face to face to begin restoring his confidence in intimate human communication. Nothing great was solved today. Nothing but careful listening, encouragement and support.

When our first telecomputers were installed in 1987 some persons resisted because they said we would become technicians, responding to clients by typing on a computer terminal and never able to fully utilize all of our interpersonal skills. Since that time I have found the opposite to be true. The telecomputers have eliminated all paperwork and mundane information-giving counseling. I am more able to work in primary counseling activities.

After John left I was free to check on the progress of several individuals who are in the midst of career retraining. Formerly we called this a "mid-life career crisis," now it is called re-training because the typical worker in industry has to go through

some sort of retraining every five years. It is no longer considered a crisis since it is routine. My role as their retraining advisor is to monitor their progress, discuss with them any problems or difficulties, plan with them potential career tracks, and in general attempt to motivate them to complete their program. In 1990 the title of our institution changed from a "community college" to a "community learning clearinghouse," to reflect the nature of our function. Our role now is to help the person identify their career and personal objectives, then locate a mechanism to meet those objectives. A fair percentage of the students are pursuing totally home-based programs through their home computers. Other students are placed in more traditional training programs here and in other regional centers.

I was able to identify several of my students who were experiencing a conflict about their present goals, uncertain as to whether or not they would stay with their current program. This morning I brought four of them together in a telecomputer conference, much faster and easier then a face to face group meeting. I first had each of them complete a ranking of a series of values statements. Then I arranged for a transmission of our faces and rankings on all terminals. We then were able to have a discussion on the role of values in career planning, recognizing how we are all slightly different in our value rankings and how that can alter our individual decisions. At times I miss having direct personal contact with some of these learners, but the teleconferencing is so much more efficient.

After checking all of my students on my desk terminal I was able to spend time preparing for my "Lifestyles" class. This group, which follows some of the holistic health models developed in the later 1970s, has turned out to be one of my most rewarding professional activities. These groups are co-led by another professional such as a physician or a clergyperson, and center around developing healthy lifestyles. The holistic model states that a healthy individual develops physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and spiritually in a balanced manner. Today our topic is to be on the relationship between diet and intellectual performance. Prior to the class meeting participants were asked to complete a reading on recent medical research on ways to improve memory by diet.

"I really find it hard to believe that if I had eaten a pound of peanuts every day between the ages of five and ten that I would have a better memory today," opened Sue. She has tended to be our "doubting Thomas."

"You're missing the point," countered Ted. "The study suggested that loading with protien during pre-adolescence will slightly increase memory later in life."

"Yes, but what good does a two percent increase in memory do for me today. Especially if I would weigh 500 pounds and look like a giant peanut!"

With that the group collapsed into the giggles, aided by the fact that Jerry, the physician co-leader, pulled out a huge bag of peanuts and passed them around the group. Jerry is part of a new

breed of physicians who spend the majority of their time dealing with preventative medicine. He has helped me learn more about the body and how it's condition may affect counseling and therapy. I like to think also that I have helped him learn how to better communicate with his patients. It has been a joy working together.

"I think our discussion shows the danger of taking some of these studies on face value," introjected Jerry. "We need to look at the underlying theme, approppriate protien consumption during developmental periods is needed for intellectual development."

The discussion continued for the next hour and a half, ending with each of us making a contract to keep a complete food diary between now and next week.

I invited Jerry to stay and have lunch with myself and Ellie, a long-time colleague. We usually bring our own lunches and try to eat together every two weeks or so for relaxed conversation. We had enough to share with Jerry.

"You should be given some sort of an award, Dave. That must be the 10,000th peanut butter and jelly sandwich you have eaten in your lifetime. How can you stand it?" Ellie said in a semi-serious tone.

"I like them, and besides, old habits are hard to break," I responded.

"Yes, I know what you mean. In fact when I look back on my thirty years as a counselor, it's hard to believe that I have changed as much as I have. Its as if I made a career change without ever

changing jobs. Dave, do you ever have a desire to back to the way things were when we first started?"

"Yes and no. I really miss some portions of the old community college set-up, especially all the people. We once had a large faculty and staff, all located at one campus. Most students drove here for class...everybody was here. There was always a crowd and lots of activity. In some ways I wish we could return to that, but the changes have brought a lot of positive things. We used to work a lot harder than we do today! Our teaching and counseling was so much more inefficient. Now we have the computers handling all the routine matters, and we have more time to spend on the things that are really important."

"Sounds very similar to changes in the medical profession," suggested Jerry. "All of our medical records and an increasing portion of our patient contact is through telecomputers. I just read about a totally home-based program being pilot tested in Arizona where patients obtain all their health maintenance information through home terminals. It is possible to self-diagnose all but the most severe illnesses."

"At first I was really frightened by all these computers. I tried to ignore them and hope they would go away," laughed Ellie. "I was amazed how resistant to change I had become. Since then I have made friends with my computer..."

After lunch I had time scheduled to prepare for my counseling license renewal. The licensing of professional counselors has been

one of the most significant changes in counseling in the last fifty years. Four levels of counseling are now certified: Trainee, Paraprofessional, Professional I, and Professional II. My current licensure is as a Professional II, which requires a doctorate and ten years of experience as a Professional I. The original licensure required a written exam and presentation of video tapes demonstrating competence. Every five years a written renewal exam is needed, and every ten years both written and performance competence is required. This year all I need to complete is the written exam.

For my studying I have been using the Counselor Renewal Package prepared by the American Counselor's Association (formerly the American Personnel and Guidance Association). The package displays, on my desk top terminal, sample test questions and simulated client situations. It then compares your answers to a panel of experts. It is also possible to page through a virtual encyclopedia of counseling:

"Welcome to the ACA Counselor Renewal Package. Please enter your name."

"Dave."

"Hello, Dave. What do you wish to study today?"

"Theories of Counseling."

"Thank you Dave. Question #1 is, Which of the following persons developed the uni-cultural theory of counseling: Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Sonja Baines, or Sun Lee?"

"Sonja Baines."

"That is correct, Dave. However, you should know that Carl Jung did have a great interest in inter-cultural study. Do you wish to know any more about these persons, or go on to the next question?"

"No, I would like a cup of black coffee, decaffeinated."

"I'm sorry, Dave. That does not compute, please repeat your transmission."

"Just checking to see if you were awake. Next question please....."

Before leaving for the day I checked in with Bill regarding any changes in my schedule for the next two days, and to see if he wanted to discuss any of the intakes he had conducted.

"Well, how did the intakes go today Bill? Anything you need to talk about?"

"No, not really. Everything went fine...well...except for one woman, Clara was her name. She has recently retired and was feeling a little out of sorts. After talking for a while I suggested that she use the Leisure Time Planning Package on her home terminal. But now that I think about it, she might do better in a group rather than working on her own. What do you think?"

"I'm not sure either. I've got some time tomorrow afternoon, why don't you see if you can arrange having her come in. She may need to talk things over face to face," I said,knowing that she had grown up in a pre-computer era.

"Sounds fine, Dave. I'll see what I can arrange. See you tomorrow."

"Good night, Bill."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The above scenario obviously will not come true exactly as stated, but it does serve to underscore this author's belief that at the core of counseling is the ability to foster self-understanding and communication between persons. The technological changes of our future will not necessarily depersonalize our lives, but instead will free us up to begin to grow more as persons by eliminating certain time-consuming tasks. Because of this additional free time in the lives of all persons, counselors will be provided with many opportunities to creatively work with their clients.

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